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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2007

VICTIMS OF TELEMARKETING SCAM REIMBURSED

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney Pat Meehan and Acting Inspector in Charge Oriey Glenn, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, today announced the distribution of \$326,754 of proceeds of telemarketing fraud to victims of the fraud. The currency was forfeited to the United States pursuant to a civil forfeiture complaint and recently distributed to the victims. The case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service, with the assistance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Montreal Police Department.

“This was a fraud that claimed more than 120 victims including many senior citizens,” said Meehan. “Our first priority was making those victims whole and through the work of the U.S. Postal Inspectors and Canadian police, we were able to do that.”

The victims were falsely told that they had won a contest or lottery and that, in order to receive their winnings, they needed to pay certain fees by wiring money to individuals in Canada. The victims wired the money as directed, by Western Union and Money Gram. Western Union and Money Gram agencies in Canada issued checks payable to the different individuals, in amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 (Canadian). Thousands of these third-party Western Union and Money Gram checks were deposited into an account at the National Bank of Greece, in Montreal, Canada, in April and May 2004. The National Bank of Greece was suspicious of the checks and froze the account. On October 6, 2005, the United States Postal Inspection Service, seized \$644,950.88 (Canadian) from this account, obtaining the agreement of the account holder that the money could be forfeited to the United States. The complaint sought the forfeiture of the money seized to the United States as proceeds of wire fraud and as proceeds of money laundering. On September 21, 2006, after no one challenged the forfeiture of the money, the Court ordered the money forfeited to the United States.

After the money was forfeited, the United States provided notice to the victims of the telemarketing fraud of their opportunity to make a claim to the money they lost through the scheme, by filing a petition for remission with the U.S. Department of Justice. The U.S. Department of Justice recently granted the petitions filed by the victims. Approximately 78 victims of the telemarketing scheme were mailed checks, reimbursing them for \$326,754 of their losses.

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